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# THE ADAPTABILITY OF THE ETHICAL TEACHING OF PAUL TO OUR TIMES

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In attempting an estimate of the value for our times of the ethical teaching of Paul we shall first summarize the chief features of it which we have already examined (see *Biblical World* for October, 1916), as well as certain others which limitations of space made it impossible to discuss in the article referred to. In the second place, we shall endeavor to determine the attitude of the modern mind to these leading features of Paul's ethical teaching, at the same time eliminating those features which are repugnant to our present-day thinking. In the third place, after these eliminations have been made, we shall inquire whether or not there is anything remaining of this ethical teaching which may be adaptable to our times. And, lastly, if it should appear that there is, an attempt will be made to show in what manner this adaptation may be possible.

## 1. Summary of the Chief Features of Paul's Ethical Teaching

1. Despite the large place which it occupies in his letters, Paul's ethical teaching is only an item, albeit an important item, in the larger program of his gospel of salvation.

2. It is fundamentally supernaturalistic: (a) in its aim, or motive, namely, the attaining of a future, other-worldly salvation, or state of supreme happiness; (b) in its absolute ideal, namely, the

nature of an omnipotent God, the criterion of conduct; (c) in the means for the realization of this ideal, which is the Holy Spirit at work in and through the spirit of the Christian.

3. It is circumscribed in its range.

a) It is directed to a limited group, to a special body, called the church, which is made up of those who have met the preliminary conditions necessary to salvation, and are, therefore, provisionally saved.

b) It is temporary, being intended only for a brief period of time, a few years at most, at the end of which the whole order of things—the physical as well as the social world—is to be revolutionized by a divine intervention.

c) It implies a static society. In view of the impending change in the social order, the *status quo* is to remain undisturbed. The Christian is not to seek, through conduct, to contribute to the betterment of society. Society's improvement is to come about by dissolution rather than by evolution, and is entirely in the hands of God. The Christian's duty is to remain in the same condition he was in when he became a Christian, awaiting the social regeneration which God himself is to effect miraculously. If he was a slave, he was admonished not to desire freedom, even if it were within reach. If he was unmarried, he was not to desire to

marry. If he was married, he was not to seek a severance of the marriage bond. He was not to try to improve the political state, but to be absolutely obedient to the officers of the government, i.e., of Rome, who, he was told by Paul, were God's representatives, or ministers, for holding in check wrong-doers.

## **2. Attitude of the Modern Mind to the Leading Features of Paul's Ethical Teaching**

1. The modern mind is unwilling to consider ethics as a discipline which is subordinated to theology.

2. To the modern man the supernaturalism which lies at the base of Paul's ethic is objectionable.

a) He wants a higher motive for conduct than the hope of a future salvation. The world has advanced beyond this primitive incentive to right living. While the hope of immortality is still strong in the human breast, it is not consonant with the highest ethical idealism of today, even within the church itself, to make the attainment of heaven the ground for the moral appeal.

b) An absolute ideal of conduct, which requires one to act as an infinite God acts, would no doubt seem impracticable to the modern man, even if his world-view coincided with that of Paul at many points, but to follow such an ideal is doubly impracticable for the man who has enlarged his conception of God to accommodate it to the measureless universe which modern science has made known to him.

c) The modern man finds it difficult to make vital to himself, as Paul seems to have done, the fact that his ethical life is a direct manifestation of the work-

ing in him of the Holy Spirit. Whatever his theological belief regarding the Holy Spirit, the relation of the Spirit to conduct is less real than appears to have been the case in the experience of Paul.

3. The modern man is not satisfied with the range of the Pauline ethic; the field of its operation is entirely too limited for his world-view.

a) He wants an ethic that is worldwide in its appeal. An ethic that addresses itself only to the members of the church, on the presupposition that they and they alone constitute the saved, is a misfit in a world where the line which separates the church from the world is so faintly drawn as it is in the world of today, and where no particular group of men is regarded as the saved, but where all men are looked upon as in the process of being saved.

b) The temporary, ad interim character of this ethic strikes him as utterly inadequate to meet the requirements of a world that shows no signs, after twenty centuries, of experiencing the cataclysmic upheaval which Paul expected to witness in his lifetime, and upon which unfulfilled expectation the practical features of his ethical teaching were projected.

c) An ethic which presents no constructive program for such problems as slavery, marriage, divorce, and the improvement of the state, and which, if followed to its conclusion, discourages and excludes the various institutions which modern society has devised for the preservation of life and for the comfort, well-being, and earthly happiness of mankind, makes but slight appeal to the man of today.

The results of this analysis of the attitude of the modern mind to the leading features of Paul's ethical teaching must at first prove disappointing and disconcerting to the man who is accustomed to regard the New Testament as an infallible guide in matters of faith and practice. Little of the Pauline ethic seems to be left after the modern man, trained in the scientific methods of the schools, has applied his tests of value to it. When he discards its supernaturalism, he sweeps away its very groundwork. When he demands that the standards of conduct shall be universal in their application, and not limited to a certain group of society called the church, that they shall be timeless rather than temporary, that they shall be operative in a progressive society rather than in one which is incapable of improvement and destined to a speedy destruction, he so alters the working of the Pauline ethic as to render it virtually un-Pauline. But even after all these subtractions have been made, we have still to inquire whether or not there is anything remaining of this ethical teaching of Paul, and if so, how far it may be of value to modern society.

### **3. What Remains of the Ethical Teaching of Paul and Its Possible Service to Modern Society?**

*i. The answer of science.*—One important feature of the ethic of Paul seems not to have been disturbed by the passage of the years. Criticism, science, philosophy—all combined have not destroyed the central idea of the ethics of this first-century thinker. They have stripped it of its supernaturalism, but

they have not destroyed its essence. If, then, there is anything pertaining to this ethic which is at all adaptable to our times, it must be sought in this remainder, which has survived the testing and sifting of twenty centuries. This remainder is nothing more or less than disinterested love—the *agape* of Paul.

In order, therefore, to determine the adaptability to our times of the Pauline ethic, or, more accurately, of this remainder, we must ascertain whether or not Paul's *agape*, or disinterested love, is an essential fact of experience for this day, as well as for Paul's day, or whether it also is as uncertain and as unnecessary as his supernaturalism, which the spirit of our times rejects. If the men of today can find no trace of, or place for, disinterested love, either in the individual or in society, then this residuum of the Pauline ethic is not adaptable to our times. Despite Paul's assurance that love never fails, but is one of the things that abide, it also must be classed among the traditions and temporary institutions of the past, along with the prophecies that fail, the tongues that cease, and the supernatural knowledge (*gnosis*) that vanishes away. For no ethical principle can hope for general acceptance in our times that rests merely upon authority. It must rest upon the solid foundation of fact, as determined by the approved methods of present-day scientific research.

Unfortunately, there is little agreement among writers on ethics as to the fundamental principles of the science. The incentives to conduct vary all the way from the future rewards and punishments of the church to the hedonism of Bentham. Into this maze of

conflicting theories we shall not enter. What we seek is an answer to the question as to whether or not the group of sciences which we must, in the main, count on to furnish the materials for our ethical systems reinforce Paul's statement that disinterested love will not pass away. Foremost among these sciences are biology, anthropology, physiology, and psychology. To be more specific, we are concerned to know whether or not these sciences warrant the statement that the disinterested love of the New Testament is an innate instinct, an inalienable quality of human nature, an ever-present feature of human society.

Fortunately, this question is not difficult to answer. There is abundant proof, drawn from all these particular sciences, to show that what Paul and the New Testament generally designate as *agape*, and what untechnically we have called disinterested love, is a fundamental instinct of human nature, variously described as sympathy, benevolence, pity, unselfishness, tender emotion, higher impulse, otherism, and altruism.

In making good the foregoing statement we turn first to Darwin, for several reasons. In the first place, although he is not the originator of the evolutionary hypothesis, Darwin nevertheless marks the beginning of the present, or evolutionary, period of modern science. Secondly, we turn to him because of the great influence which he has had on ethical theories in particular; for while there may be some exaggeration in President Schurman's statement, he is not far from the truth when he says: "Darwin certainly is the father of evolutionary ethics; and the first five

chapters of the *Descent of Man* are turning out . . . more pregnantly suggestive and more revolutionary than any other modern contribution to the subject of morals." In the third place, we do well to understand Darwin from the standpoint of ethics because he has been so generally misunderstood from this standpoint. The importance which Darwin attached to the theory of the survival of the fittest is chiefly responsible for the prevalence of the notion that self-preservation, or egoism, is not only the first law of nature, but also the paramount law of nature and of human society. It is upon the supposed preponderance of influence of this first law of nature that Nietzsche, who has been popularly, though not correctly, regarded as the "most orthodox exponent of Darwinian ideas in their application to ethics," built up his doctrine of the superman. For the same reason, as Professor J. Mark Baldwin reminds us, Thomas Huxley, "one of the champions of Darwinism here [i.e., in the ethical field], deserted the colors." But so to understand Darwin is to misunderstand him, as the following quotation well shows: "While the followers of Darwin laid stress on the struggle for existence, developed it, and painted it in ever darker colors, they apparently forgot that he had written in other terms in the *Descent of Man*. In this work he had set the problem before him of tracing the evolution of man from simpler forms of life, and an evolution of all the features of human life, physical, psychological, ethical. Thus he was led to lay stress on the social character of many animals, on their co-operation, on the evolution of sympathy and mutual helpfulness,

until in certain parts that kind of struggle which was prominent in the *Origin of Species* tended almost to disappear. The unit in the struggle changes before our eyes; it is no longer the individual who struggles, gains an advantage; it is 'those communities which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members that would flourish best and rear the greatest number of offspring' (*Descent of Man*, p. 163). Even from Darwin's point of view here is a new factor introduced into the struggle for existence. Sympathy, mutual help, or union between members of the same species for attack or defense, has been recognized as a decisive factor in the evolution of life. The community has taken the place of the individual, and mutual help is as much a fact of life as mutual competition."<sup>1</sup>

A few sentences from the *Descent of Man* will justify the foregoing quotation, and at the same time show that disinterested love, which Paul urged upon his converts as being the epitome of Judaistic ethics as well as the ethical essence of Christianity, is identical with the "sympathy," or "mutual help," referred to as a "new factor introduced into the struggle for existence," that is to say, new when the human species began to appear.

"They [some apes] might insist that they were ready to aid their fellow apes of the same troops in many ways, to risk their lives for them, and to take charge of their orphans; but they would be forced to acknowledge that disinterested love for all living creatures the most notable attribute of man, was quite

beyond their comprehension. . . . The moral sense perhaps affords the best and highest distinction between man and the lower animals; but I need say nothing on this head, as I have so lately endeavored to show that the social instincts—the prime principle of man's moral constitution—with the aid of active intellectual powers and the effects of habit, naturally lead to the golden rule, 'As ye would that men should do to you, do ye to them likewise'; and this lies at the foundation of morality" (pp. 128-29). "To do good unto others—to do unto others as ye would they should do unto you—is the foundation-stone of morality" (p. 134).

It cannot be without significance that this greatest intellectual figure of the nineteenth century, this creator of the present scientific epoch, this careful investigator, whose researches give him the first place in biology, anthropology, physiology, psychology, sociology, and ethics, expressed the fundamental fact of human nature from the ethical standpoint in the very words of Jesus which are also the epitome of the ethical teaching of Paul.

Evolutionary science not only predicates the existence of altruism, and shows it to be precisely what Jesus, Paul, and the other New Testament thinkers designate as *agape*, or disinterested love, but also traces step by step the successive stages of its evolution from its earliest manifestations. Darwin believes "the so-called moral sense" to have been "aboriginally derived from the social instincts, for both relate at first exclusively to the community" (p. 121). The social instincts, in both

<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopedias of Religion and Ethics*, art., "Altruism."

the lower animals and man, he regards "as having been developed for the general good rather than for the general happiness of the species" (p. 122). And in opposition to the "selfishness," or "greatest happiness" theory of conduct, he makes the general good or welfare of the community, rather than the general happiness, the "standard of morality." Thus he would remove the reproach of "laying the foundation of the noblest part of our nature in the base principle of selfishness" (p. 123). The social instincts he seems to identify ultimately with the "maternal instincts" (p. 112.)

Th. Ribot<sup>1</sup> finds "the source of all altruistic, social, and moral manifestations" to be "tender emotion" (p. 236). The tender emotions rest on sympathy (he uses the word technically), which itself is the result of a long development, being biological before it is moral or even psychological. He finds the three stages of its development to be first, physiological, secondly, psychological, and, thirdly, intellectual (pp. 231-33). Tracing tenderness back to its first manifestations in children and the higher animals, he finds it in their attitude toward the mother or the nurse (p. 236). Of the fundamental or innate character of the altruistic instinct he says: "The inanity of the altruistic instinct, therefore, seems to me proved beyond the possibility of reply" (p. 238). And

again: "The altruistic tendency, or tender emotion, which exists in all men [except those whose moral sense is abnormal] . . . belongs to our constitution, as much as the fact of having two eyes or a stomach" (pp. 292-93). He concludes his study of the moral feeling as follows: "Moral emotion is a very complex state. . . . It is not a simple act, but the sum of a set of tendencies. Let us eliminate the intellectual elements, and enumerate its emotional constituents only: (1) as basis, sympathy, i.e., a community of nature and disposition; (2) the altruistic or benevolent tendency manifesting itself under different forms (attraction of like to like, maternal or paternal affection, etc.), at first weak, but gaining more expansion by the restriction of the egoistic feelings; (3) the sense of justice with its obligatory character; (4) the desire of approbation, or of divine or human rewards, and the fear of disapprobation and punishments" (p. 200).

It is not possible to pursue this phase of the subject farther, nor is it necessary. That altruism is a fundamental, inalienable characteristic of human nature and of human society is put beyond question by an unlimited amount of scientific testimony.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, there can be no doubt that this altruism is identical with the essential feature of Paul's ethical teaching. Paul, as we have seen, regards this altruism as the direct result

<sup>1</sup> *The Psychology of the Emotions*, 2d ed., 1911.

<sup>2</sup> Here are just a few of the works that might be cited, in addition to those already mentioned: Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Psychology* and *Principles of Ethics*; John Fiske, *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy*, Vol. II; Henry Drummond, *The Ascent of Man*; Leslie Stephen, *The Science of Ethics*; Westermarck, *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*; Paulsen, *A System of Ethics*; and last, but not least, the originator of the term, "altruism," Auguste Comte, *Système de politique positive*, or a digest and criticism of the same; Edward Caird, *The Social Philosophy and Religion of Comte*.

of a miraculous influence of an anthropomorphic deity upon the individual through the instrumentality of a theological agent which he called the Holy Spirit. Modern science finds no place for this supernatural explanation of the phenomenon. Nevertheless the phenomenon is the same; the *agape* of Paul is identical with the altruism of science, and this is the all-important fact.

The man who prizes his New Testament and who believes that Paul has an ethical message for our times will do well not to insist that twentieth-century science must both listen to this first-century apostle and also adopt his supernaturalism, or else be anathema. The genuine hierophants of science of all ages are seekers after truth, and welcome truth wherever it is to be found. It is as true of them in this age as it ever has been. If there is any ethical truth in Paul, or in the rest of the New Testament, they will gladly appropriate it, but they must first be assured that it is truth, and this assurance they can only arrive at after they have applied their own approved tests of truth. As long as the advocates of the Pauline ethic insist that its essence is to be found in its supernaturalism, they may expect little response from the representatives of modern science. But, if they are willing to see the ideas of Paul go into the crucible of the modern laboratory, and will be content with the residue after the acids and fire have done their worst, they may count on seeing that residue go into the making of the social fabric of tomorrow. Few have been the instances, however, in which the defenders of orthodoxy have been willing to submit to this trial by ordeal. They

have made the supernatural paramount, and have given little or no quarter to those who could not pronounce this shibboleth. In so doing they thought they were doing Paul service, but in reality they were shunting him off into the corner of dogmatism in an age that repudiates dogmatism, with the result that one of the world's ethical pioneers is hardly mentioned in modern scientific works on ethics, which ought to be as unthinkable as that the name of Socrates should find no place in such works. Here is one of the "discoverers in morals" who, like a luminary in the exceedingly dark firmament of first-century immorality, held forth an ethical ideal which, even twenty centuries after his time, is the goal of our best endeavors, both individually and collectively. Yet those who are scientifically striving to realize his ideal are made strangers to him by his friends.

2. *The answer of the multitudes.*—It is conceivable that the answer which science gives to our question, while probably correct, and hence a safe guide for some future day, may be so far in advance of the popular mind as to make it inapplicable to present-day conditions. If we are to determine whether or not the essence of the Pauline ethic is adaptable to our times, we must ascertain the attitude of the unscientific multitudes to the doctrine of disinterested love. This may seem to be a questionable source from which to extract an answer to our query. The mind of the crowd is uncertain; what it desires today it may repudiate tomorrow. Yet, as Victor Hugo reminds us, the voice of the people is "a fearful and sacred voice, which is composed of the roar of

the brute and the speech of God, which terrifies the feeble and which warns the wise." If we are wise, we shall not be deaf to this voice of God, as we attempt to discover how far the disinterested love which Paul preached is adaptable to our times.

Turning to this phase of the question, we are at once confronted with the striking fact that the multitudes know little about Paul's system of thought as such, and seem to care less, except as it is mediated to them through the sacraments or the teachings of the churches, in neither of which cases is it recognized by them as distinctively Pauline. But that they are greatly interested in the residuum of the ethical teaching of Paul, apart from its supernaturalism, is abundantly proved by the popular demand for universal brotherhood, a more thorough-going democracy, a broader humanitarianism, and world-wide peace, all of which are modern expressions of the love preached by Paul and by Jesus.

The popular desire to see this love find social expression is registered in many ways, three of which it will be sufficient to mention. First, it is in response to this desire that there is going on a rapid and far-reaching extension of the activities of municipal, state, and federal governments throughout the world, theoretically in the interest of all classes, but really in the interest, first of all, of those who are economically most in need. City parks and playgrounds, free concerts and art exhibits, mothers' pensions, child-labor laws, governmental industrial insurance, are all indications of what men are doing in their collective capacity to realize politically their altruistic ideals.

A second indication of this tendency is to be seen in the sympathetic co-operation between employers and employees, which is so marked and favorable a sign of our times. Large firms and corporations, which were pronounced soulless a generation ago, are today voluntarily establishing cordial relations between their administrative heads and their operatives by reducing the hours of employment, by granting the Saturday half-holiday, by providing recreation and rest centers, annual outings, insurance and savings departments, by increasing wages and introducing the profit-sharing system.

A third channel through which the popular desire for an altruistic social order is making itself felt is modern literature and art. The drama, the novel, lyric poetry, socialistic writings, the magazines, the daily press, painting, sculpture, pageants, and motion pictures—all are voicing this innate and ineradicable otherism which is swelling up from the ranks of the multitudes, as the artistic interpreters of life discern it.

One of the striking features of this modern literature and art is the place which Jesus occupies in it. Not much is made of the mediaeval Christ; there is little emphasis laid on the propitiatory death of the Savior. The Christ whom the common people are turning to is the living, historical Jesus, in whom they see the embodiment of love and sympathy for their kind. Whether or not the theologians are making progress with the task of interpreting Jesus for the men of our times, it is hardly too much to say that a Christology is taking shape in the minds of the unscientific multitudes, the central feature of which

is altruism. Jesus stands for happiness, human welfare, social justice, and world-brotherhood.

#### **4. How the Essence of the Pauline Ethic May Be Adapted to Our Times**

If we are correct in our foregoing conclusions, first, that the essence of Paul's ethical teaching, *agape*, or disinterested love, is identical with altruism, which modern science shows to belong to all normal human beings, and, secondly, that this altruism is adaptable to our times, both from the scientific view of society and from the popular expression of the social mind of today, it is important to determine how this adaptation may be made. Broadly speaking, we may say that it may be made in two ways, namely, the personal and the constructive.

The personal method of making altruism effective as a social force is not new. It is set forth in many of the ethical injunctions of Jesus, and is illustrated in his parables, notably that of the Good Samaritan. It is implied or expressed in Paul's ethical utterances and beautifully illustrated in his treatment of the runaway slave, Onesimus, as depicted in his letter to Philemon. It is the method which the Christian churches have generally used; their members have been taught to love one another in the personal manner of the New Testament.

Much can be said in favor of this individualistic, non-scientific method of applying the love-principle to society, not the least of which is that "it blesses him that gives and him that takes." It is responsible for most of the saintliness

which has blessed the world. It has made possible the Brainerds, the Damiens, the McAuleys, and the Hadleys. It has been the chief means in the making of twice-born men. While it may be flouted by some, its transforming power cannot be dispensed with so long as there are Jean Valjeans to respond to its quickening touch. Yet it has its limitations, and fails as a complete and adequate method of making full use of the altruistic instinct, that basic, biologic fact on which not only personal regeneration, but also social reconstruction, depends. A thoroughly scientific, constructive method is necessary. It is such a method that our day demands, and which it is working out, if slowly, nevertheless with promise of ultimate success. The personal method must be supplemented by a constructive one.

The constructive method rests first of all upon the important fact that the nerve centers, which are the source of altruism, are capable of development. The chief means of this development are, first, the repression of the egoistic nerve activity; secondly, the stimulation of the altruistic nerve activity. Since the struggle for existence, which is first in the order of animal and human evolution, stimulates the egoistic nerve centers, these centers show a fuller development than the altruistic and hence easily assert their superiority over them. A constructive method of developing altruism will first of all repress egoism by diminishing the struggle for existence, which, in our modern industrial order, can be done only by reducing the hours of physical toil and by making it possible for all men to receive for their labor a surplus over and above their actual

needs. All the physical sciences which make easier the problem of existence—mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, medicine, agriculture, mechanics, engineering—have as their collective and ultimate purpose the diminution of brutalizing toil and the increase of man's margin over and above his primary physical needs. These sciences are therefore laying the foundation for the altruistic, or spiritual, social order of the future. This means that altruism rests first of all upon an economic foundation. Yet, while this is the first lesson to be learned, and not an easy one either, it must not be forgotten that this is after all only a foundation; it is the negative side of our problem.

The positive side of the task of making society constructively altruistic is in the hands of the social and psychical sciences—economics, sociology, law, ethics, theology, psychology, education. Here we must remind ourselves that "that is not first which is spiritual but that which is natural." Just as the egoistic tendencies are far in advance of the altruistic, so the natural or physical sciences, those which minister to the egoistic, economic, or first wants of man, are far in advance of the second group of sciences mentioned above, that is, those which further social adjustment, create ideals, and carry forward positively the growth of altruism, both in the individual and in society. Compare medicine with law, physics with ethics, mathematics with psychology, engineering with education, and you compare certitude with guesses, rock foundation with sifting sand. The physical sciences have dug out of the earth, dipped up from the watercourses, and wrested from the air

enough of the world's treasure to make easy for everyone the struggle for existence, but our social sciences are unequal to the task of distributing this treasure. In our Father's house there is bread enough and to spare, but the sons of an egoistic social order perish with hunger. Hence arise industrial competition, militarism, preventable diseases, poverty, crime, and the endless line of social ills which make us hang our heads in shame in this scientific age. The great need of our day is that we shall so order the social and psychical sciences that the development of the altruistic brain centers shall go forward rapidly, and then organize our political, industrial, and social institutions in such a way as to create an environment as nearly as possible in harmony with our altruistic ideals.

In making love operative in the world the modern man can afford to follow the personal method of Paul as long as it is useful, but he cannot stop with that; he must add thereto the constructive method. In so doing he will continue to develop the physical sciences so as to meet society's ever-growing physical needs, but he will give his best endeavors to the development of the backward social and psychic sciences. The nineteenth century saw the physical sciences put upon a firm and substantial basis. We must hope that the twentieth century will see the same thing done for the social and psychic sciences. Until this is done we need not look for the "Edenization of the world."

Toward this consummation the essential feature of the ethical teaching of Paul, namely, altruism, unerringly leads us. Therefore, it is most certainly

adaptable to our times. When practiced in individual relationships and applied constructively to the organiza-

tion of society, it will bring mankind to the ultimate victory. "The last enemy that man shall overcome is himself."

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## REDEFINITION IN PRESENT-DAY THEOLOGY

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*Progressive religious thought today is steadily growing more constructive, but it still faces problems which demand answers that may seem to some negative. But negation is only incidental to the actual requirements of a method. Sooner or later we shall see that a readjustment of the gospel to the world is proceeding as constructively now as in the days of Clement of Alexandria. We should never forget that intellectual problems will ultimately be answered by facts gained by reliable investigation.*

There is a very general opinion that theology is a free product of human thought. The idea seems to be that we are always at liberty to devise a new system, formulate a particular doctrine, or steadfastly maintain a traditional position. No notion could, however, be more erroneous. The theology of a given age is the indefeasible fruit of that age. It could not originate earlier or in a different circle; the attempt to force it to persist unchanged on into another period and under other conditions is only a violent anachronism. The theology of St. Paul could arise only in the middle of the first century, in a consciousness determined in part by Jewish and in part by Greek thought. Augustine was the mouthpiece of the theology of the fifth century, since in him met and blended the great movements of his day—Manichaeism, neo-Platonism, a cer-

tain point of view concerning the Scriptures, a psychology based on experience, a conviction of the sanctity of dogma, and a necessity for the consolidation of ecclesiastical authority and practice. Given the genius of an Augustine, a period fifty years earlier or fifty years later would have produced a different theology, if indeed a theology would then have been possible. St. Paul stated our law when he spoke of a "fullness of time." There are, moreover, long periods of time—periods of transition—when no precipitation of theology is possible. Here we can describe only tendencies, for theology is never at a standstill. What we designate as the New England theology, beginning about 1750 and continuing for a hundred years and more, was not so much a theology as a variety of movements which sought a solution of certain